

YOUR TOWN HALL

This meeting began by voting on Resolution 10-99, which appointed Andrew Spears as First Assistant Fire Chief. His appointment was unanimous and sworn into office thereafter.

Following Mr. Spears appointment the mayor recognized Heidi Brunt, the Township Clerk, for her completion of the Certified Municipal Clerks designation program.

A large segment of the soccer community turned out for this meeting to respond to proposed construction of turf fields at the West Front Street Park (WFSP). The Township proposes to build two turf fields at the park on West Front Street and Crawfords Corner-Everett Road with bonded funds from an ordinance in 2006.

Due to the large number of people that attended the meeting to speak to the turf field issue, the mayor decided to allow the public to speak before the business portion of the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vinnie Bran said that he coaches 3 soccer teams and the fields are atrocious compared to fields in other towns. He said because of the economy buying fields now would be cheaper than waiting. Six hundred plus kids are playing soccer and we need the fields.

Carol Baker said that she is a field hockey referee and has been all over the county to officiate games and the middle school fields are the worst in the area. She does not want to see the bonded money spent on fields that the schools will not be using and urged the township to reopen the talks with the school board because she wants schools and the town to share fields.

The mayor replied by saying that he sees no reason why the field at H.S. South should not be open to Pop Warner.

Bill Healy said snow removal on the field at H.S. North took off the crown about 8-10 years ago before a Pop Warner game. Building the fields at the WFSP is very poor planning and wants the turf fields at Charger Field. He said the bathrooms and snack bar would not have to be moved. The mayor stated that he appreciated his comments and asked Mr. Healy to yield the floor.

Joe Grarino said some of the worst fields he's coached on are in Middletown. He said we need good fields in Middletown.

Jill Henry read a letter from the Lincroft Village Green Association (LVGA), <http://www.lincroftvillagegreen.org/>, urging the township to pay off this bond. They are against the stadium but want to fix up WFSP. She also said that any money above operating budget should be directed to Bayshore flooding problems.

Mike Mascone said he would rather play away games with his soccer team because of the poor condition of Middletown's fields. He submitted a petition supporting turf fields from soccer parents.

James Cody said in 2006 the Chargers were in negotiation with the Board of Education (BOE) to use the fields at HS South. In 2008 the BOE issued a policy, 75-10 use of school facilities, stating that nobody could ever use their turf fields except for school use. The Mayor asked the administrator to draft a letter to the BOE to revisit this policy. Mr. Cody said that the school fields are used extensively by the schools and the Chargers would not get much use of the school fields. He went on to say that he thinks that there should be several turf fields in the township.

Tim Rourke said that he is the referee coordinator for the BYAA league. He has to spend an hour a week, before games, filling holes in fields before they can play games. He said that something needs to be done.

Stephanie Ryan said the fields in Middletown haven't changed from when she played. The stadium improvements at WFSP are needed because they will need to play at night.

Maria Pino said the Chargers are happy where they are and wanted to know why they can't stay. They spent \$87,000 to bring the concessions up to date. Tony Mercantante said environmental issues prevent parking or multi purpose fields at Charger field.

Chris Sovino said his daughter had suffered injuries from playing on township fields. He is embarrassed about the field conditions in Middletown and the town should move forward with the turf fields.

Phil (could not hear last name), who is a soccer coach spoke to say that he considers safety

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first and there is a high risk of injury to players in Middletown, especially at WFSP. Fields in other towns are better. He feels the BOE restricts use of the high school fields.

Brian Cook said we are not a "Fields of Dreams" but "Fields of Fools." He wants us to invest in our children.

Peter Simpson said everyone agrees we need better facilities but where do we put them? They need to be in the right place. Their group spoke to the mayor a couple of times and he knows that their group is not opposed to the fields.

Dan Williams lives adjacent to the park and agrees there are potholes in the fields but feels adding a stadium is not conducive to the neighborhood. It is the wrong place for this.

Patty Dominach stressed safety for those playing and those not playing on the fields and said there are no sidewalks or parking. A traffic study should be done.

Judy Krivitsky has seen many beautiful sites except in Middletown. She does not believe that the WFSP is the right location for a complex. She asked if forming a committee to evaluate sites would help. A number of Committee people replied that that is what the Recreation Master Plan did.

Mary Mahoney went to a Freeholder meeting to show a Request For Proposal (RFP). Freeholder Burry stated it is a terrible place for a multi-sports facility and couldn't believe Middletown is considering it. Mahoney repeated opinion that all fields in Middletown are poorly maintained. Fiore asked about a letter from SONIC (Save Our Neighborhoods In Crisis), <http://middletownmike.blogspot.com/2010/02/lincoft-residents-group-sonic-send.html>, to clarify their position on repairing field. She said that they do not object to repairing the fields.

Maureen Massell remarked about buying a home in the surrounding area. The buyer would like to know what type of properties are in the area. She said that football and soccer fields do not attract derelicts and they would not deteriorate the neighborhood.

John Sabatos wanted to know if money was set aside to fix existing fields and urged the township to use the \$2.5M bond to fix them. Committeeman Fiore said that is the amount of use

the fields get, no amount of money will fix them. Mr. Sabatos said that if the turf fields are built at WFSP the amenities will follow. Mr. Sabatos wanted to know who would pay utilities for the stadium. Tony Mercantante said most fields are on school property and they are not the towns' responsibility to maintain. He also said we don't have the luxury to let fields rest for a season.

John McGuire said all youth clubs are self-supporting and the township contributes to utilities.

Andrew Bane wanted to know if the Township is willing to work with the BOE. Tony Mercantante said the BOE said "no" to a turf field at Thorne and Thompson and suggested using Nutswamp, which caused the town to move on. He said the Township would write a letter to the BOE to reconsider use of their turf field for games. Committeeman Byrnes said the issue of communication with the BOE needs more work and is willing to do this. He said the Recreation Implementation Committee should meet with the BOE. Discussions need to take place about use of fields. The mayor said that he does not want attorneys present.

Jeff Blumengold is in favor of modest improvements designed to protect the safety of those that have approval to use the property on West Front Street. He spoke directly to the BOE and spoke privately with the mayor. He said the BOE is willing to meet with the Township, but the last communication from the Township to the BOE was that the discussion was closed and that the Township chose to move in a new direction. (See correspondence at:

<http://ia341307.us.archive.org/3/items/MiddletownBoardOfEducationResponseToTurfFields/BoardOfEdResponse.pdf>). The BOE said that as far as they are concerned, in any official capacity no one has reached out to them with any expression of interest to have a direct discussion. He is appalled that a conversation can not be held and that it takes 9 months to a year to address a serious concern to the children of this community and we should be ashamed of ourselves. He said page 119 of our Master Plan mentions the priority of the location of turf fields. The WFSP is not on the list. Two of the properties listed are BOE properties, which are community assets supported by our tax dollars. Mr.

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Blumengold has a problem with how long this is dragging on and the committee should consider comments of all who spoke.

Tim McArdle wants to hear from the children who play on these fields and asked a child to come up and speak. The child said the field at Trezza doesn't have grass but has holes in it and that all the fields should be improved.

Alan Vrable said he spoke with the Charger group and they want to stay put and wanted the environmental issue at Charger field clarified. Tony Mecantante said that there are significant wetlands surrounding the property and that there is no more room to disturb land for parking, etc.

Chris Kaldrovics is embarrassed at home games as are other Charger parents. The practice facilities are dangerous. There is no parking. Putting in the turf fields would offset the costs of maintaining regular fields in the long term.

Ken Bent also said he is embarrassed at home games and we need to move on with building fields. Sean Byrnes asked about geographic limits on how far away the games can be played. Someone in attendance shouted out that Kanes Lane would be OK.

Loreen Cody, a coordinator with the Chargers, said there are limits but she didn't know what they are.

Barbara Thorpe asked about Lincroft Acres because it is not in a neighborhood. She emphasized the lousy job Middletown does maintaining fields and said the town has more fields than the county.

Dan Golden said we needed to give kids a better opportunity and build a field everyone can be proud of.

Anthony Mellone said they pay high taxes because it's a nice serene neighborhood. He is opposed to the field because it will disturb that serenity. The people who want this field don't live in this neighborhood. He said sports aren't everything.

Pat (could not hear last name) said we have to share responsibility as a town. He puts up with a fire siren and others have to put up with traffic for a field.

The mayor ended the public portion by saying that the Committee wants to do what is best for the community and will revisit the issue considering all input.

PROCLAMATIONS

Three proclamations were read, but no presentations were given for these. One declared support for the National Education Association's Read Across America on March 2, 2010. Another was for supporting the Month of March as ARC Awareness Month by the State of NJ and the third was to declare February 12, 2010 as Ed Dunn Day in Middletown.

The approval of meeting minutes for the Dec. 7 Executive Session and Workshop Meetings, Dec. 17 Special Meeting, Dec. 21 Executive Session and Regular Meeting and the Jan. 3 Reorganization Meeting were voted on. All minutes were accepted by a vote of 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES

There were 5 ordinances scheduled for public hearings and adoption. All of the ordinances were passed by a 5-0 vote, except for the last ordinance, 2010-3001. This ordinance was tabled and seconded by Deputy Mayor Fiore with no explanation given. There were no public comments made regarding any of these ordinances.

Ordinance titles are as follows and a link to view them is at:

<http://www.middletownnj.org/ClerksCorner/ClerkItems.asp?ItemTypeVal=Ordinance>

2010-2997 Ordinance Authorizing Vacating a Portion of Magnolia Lane within the Township of Middletown, Monmouth County, New Jersey

2010-2998 Ordinance Amending Chapter 16, Planning and Development Regulations Application and Escrow Fees

2010-2999 Ordinance of the Township Committee of the Township of Middletown, County of Monmouth Amending Chapter 16, Planning and Development Regulations Relative to the Planned Development (PD) and Light Industrial (M-1) Zone Districts

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2010-3000 (formerly 2300) Ordinance
Repealing and Replacing Chapter 225 of the Code of the Township of Middletown Regulating Smoking

2010-3001 (formerly 2301) Ordinance
Amending §41-2.1 and §4-34 of the Code of the Township of Middletown and Ordinance No. 2009-2996 Separating Positions Director of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, Establishing Director of Finance as DCRP Eligible Position and Establishing Appropriate Salary Ranges for the Same

INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES

There was one ordinance introduced titled: 2010-3002 Ordinance Amending Chapter 16 of the Planning and Development Regulations of the Township of Middletown, County of Monmouth for Performance Development, Building Heights, and Retaining Walls

This ordinance will have a public hearing at the March 15th meeting when the public can voice their opinions towards the content of this ordinance. This ordinance will be posted on the township website in the near future and will be found with the Clerk's portion of the website.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Committee votes on resolutions in a block, or by consent. There are times when certain resolutions are removed from the block for a separate vote. Resolutions 10-79 thru 10-97 were all approved by a vote of 5-0. Resolution 10-93 was removed and will be voted on at a later date.

Before voting Committeeman Byrnes had a few questions about some of the resolutions regarding the Parks & Recreation Department. He wanted to know how much of the social events are covered by the fees charged. Parks & Rec Director Greg Silva said that the entire cost of an event is paid for by the fees charged. Mr. Byrnes asked if the purchase of pick up trucks were needed and Mr. Silva said that two trucks are going out for auction. The Administrator added that we have a lot of extremely old vehicles that cost the town a fortune to keep on the road. He said that there would be other

purchases like this that the town will do during the year.

Mr. Byrnes voted for the resolutions with a comment stating the he reached out to Mr. Silva to make sure that every expense is necessary.

Resolution 10-78 Authorizing the Payment of Bills was unanimously approved with a separate vote.

Resolution 10-98 was also removed from the agenda.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Committeeman Sean Byrnes said the focus remains on the budget. He wants the committee to put their heads together very soon and figure out what cuts will be done. Mr. Byrnes said that nothing has been done yet to address the budget this year. He agreed with many of the Governors cuts and said we need to follow his lead. Sean has made recommendations in the past and would like to see something done. Some of his recommendations will require some major restructuring in the way the town does business. At the town's current pace we will run out of money in October or November and something needs to be done now. He just got the 2008 Audit and said it is disturbing. The Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) report states that our annual contribution is \$10 million per year –a major obligation we might be faced with. These are health benefits that the town pays to retired employees. Right now the town has a “pay as you go” system. He is hoping that someday the Committee can meet to discuss some of the shortfalls the town will be up against. We expect to pay \$600 to \$700,000 for snow removal. He is looking to meet with the Committee and asked the Administrator to schedule time to make decisions.

Committeeman Steve Massell said the snow removal team did a phenomenal job in the past storm.

Committeewoman Pam Brightbill was glad that people decided (the 15 to 20 people left in room) to stay and become engaged in township business. She wanted to remind everyone that we have a Recreation Master Plan process and that they are still willing to work with the BOE. Mrs. Brightbill said that she worked on the BOE Strategic

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Master Plan a few years ago and that she still tries to attend the very sporadic meetings that they hold. She said that she worked on the community action portion of plan. Mrs. Brightbill commented on the amazing snow removal job and her neighbors were raving about the job done by Parks and Recreation in their neighborhood.

Deputy Mayor Tony Fiore agreed with Mr. Byrnes that we need to get our "hands around" post retirement benefits. He is hoping that the insurance audit will go into this area. He was not sure what the Town's obligation is towards this, but thinks there are ways that we can structure in providing benefits.

Mr. Fiore spoke to the Administrator almost daily about the budget and is encouraged with the Governors actions. He is trying to get Sean Byrnes on the calendar. He says that the Committee will have a very detailed action plan to accomplish their goals with the budget and how much can be saved.

He commented on how great it is to see the community came out about the fields and that it is necessary to have these fields. In response to a letter released by the BOE that states they were never officially asked to allow Pop Warner teams to play at H.S. South, Mr. Fiore announced that he is now officially asking the BOE to allow Pop Warner on the H.S. South field.

Mr. Fiore also commented on the snow removal and the Herculean job that was done through all of the storms.

The Mayor said they are in the process of narrowing candidates for the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and once in place it will really help them prepare and strategize for the budget. He said once the CFO is in place then they can put their heads together and see how we can get through this.

The Mayor said the Dept. of Public Works was doing a tremendous job with snow removal and have received a lot of complements on the job that was done. He felt the Governors speech was stunning in its forthrightness and the plan that has been laid out. The freezing of unfunded mandates will help the town.

The Mayor commented that he attended a seminar for the GLF insurance fund that the town belongs to and by attending the town saved \$250 in insurance premiums. He learned how tort reform

overall is essential in getting a handle on municipal costs.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The last public comment came from Sara Hammond and she wanted to know a cost estimate for turf field. Tony Mercantante said they would not know the cost until the design is complete and it goes out to bid. She had a neighbor cost it out and it came to \$2.2 million.

The Administrator said that if it comes in at that price the town would not proceed with the project.